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The Use of Imagery and Its Significance in Literary Studies

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Abstract

Imagery is one of the various techniques that poets and other writers consciously or unconsciously use to make their expressions more powerful. It is, therefore, imperative for readers to have adequate knowledge about this literary technique, but most readers fail to seriously notice the application of imagery and to describe how it assists in the effective literary analysis and pedagogical process. Particularly used in poetry, 'imagery' has its great importance as it helps readers activate their sense organs and perceive the message as intended by poets or other writers. The main issue that encouraged this study is to explore the reasons behind the application of imagery and the extent of contribution it can make to literary analysis and pedagogy. The objective of the study is to explain the significance of imagery in the literary analysis and pedagogical process. Various print as well as online materials have been consulted to gather references in the article. Thus qualitative research method based on secondary sources has been applied to substantiate the argument. The findings of the study suggest that the use of imagery makes any text formally artistic and functionally appealing. The study also concludes that the use of imagery in literary texts enhances readers' perception power as it motivates them by arousing their interest and activating their sense organs.

Keywords: Imagery, image, figurative language, sensory experience

Introduction

Imagery is a much discussed term in literary analysis. The term is derived from another term 'image' that came into English via French from Latin word *imago* that is synonymous to picture. Thus, both 'imagery' and 'image' are complimentary to each other. In this sense, imagery is about images and is a literary device that activates any of our senses and stimulates them to respond to what is put in a poem or other literary texts. The term 'image' has different connotations such as physical likeness or visible copy, mental construct or idea, figurative language (that is, imagery), optical effect and perceived identity, or public image (Pope 215-16). In this paper, the word 'image' is regarded as mental construct or idea and the word 'imagery' as a literary device.

The main issue that encouraged this study is to explore the reasons behind the application of imagery and the extent of contribution it can make to literary analysis and

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pedagogy. In most of the literary texts, we find the use of imagery; we read them but we do not take its presence in the texts so seriously. In fact, imagery has special importance in literary analysis and it also contributes a lot to pedagogical process. Therefore, the answers to the questions why the knowledge of imagery is important in the study of literature and how this knowledge contributes to effective teaching form the foundation of the present study. Thus, the objective of the study is to explain why imagery is used in literary texts and how it helps in literary analysis and pedagogical process.

Qualitative method based on secondary sources is applied to support the argument and reach the conclusion. Textbooks, published and unpublished written articles and web materials are taken as supportive reference materials. The study is intended to reach conclusion with the hypothesis that imagery provides a powerful way of communication resulting in effective teaching.

Different types of imagery have been discussed in the study of literature. Categorizing imagery, Naresh Chandra identifies the following types: perceptual imagery, conceptual imagery, emotional imagery, compound imagery and artistic imagery (qtd. in Kothawale 17-23); however, this study only discusses the perceptual images and their contributions to convey the intended meaning to the readers. The study also discusses how imagery help beautify the form of a text.

Figurative Language and Literary Studies

Writers compose different forms of writing such as novels, short stories, poetry, plays and many others, using special types of words that create some type of mental pictures or make sensory appeals. In literary studies, writers use special types of words. Through their words, they make us see some things or people, and listen to some types of sounds with our minds. Moreover, these writers enable us to taste some food or smell some aroma through the words used in the text. They appeal to our different senses and help us imagine relevant objects through comparison and contrast between what is said and what it refers to in our minds by using words in two different ways: literal use and figurative use.

In the literal use of language, the writers express their views directly. They do not use words or phrases with implied meanings. What is expressly said is the intended meaning. Readers do not have to put much labour to work out the meaning of the expressions, as the meaning is quite straightforward. A dictionary meaning is enough if the words are used literally. For example,

“That man is hideous.”

The given example gives a straightforward meaning, that is, “ugliness of the man.” It is not difficult for even lay readers to work out the right meaning of the expression regarding the picture of the man because he has been described with just the dictionary meaning of the words. Here, the words have been used literally. In contrast to the description given above, the following description of the same person has something special:

“The man is a toad.”

This expression is not straightforward and lay readers are puzzled as the description applies special technique of language use. Here the sentence says, “Man is a toad.” Is it possible that a man is a toad? No, man is a man, not a toad. In this expression, one should be able to identify the literariness of the expression, that is, the special use of a word for a different thing. Here, the toad has not been used in a literal sense, but in a figurative sense, that is, toad implies ugliness. This figurative meaning is an extra linguistic feature. It means a reader should be able to think outside the box of linguistic arena. The word ‘toad’ has been used as an image for ugliness. The word does not

literally indicate that idea but it is the mental construct of the readers, which they borrow from the real world experiences. The comparison between the man and the toad creates imagery.

Literary or figurative use of language has implied meanings. In this use of language, what is overtly said is not the intended meaning. Readers are forced to work out the underlying meaning. That is why William Wordsworth aptly suggests that poets write poetry “in a selection of language really used by men, at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect” (qtd. in Shrawan 7). The message is clear that poets’ imagination is inherent in words in literary expressions, and the words are coloured with some special features. The result is that ordinary words give extraordinary meaning.

Distancing is another feature of figurative language. It means the familiar is made the unfamiliar. Pointing out this special feature of figurative language, P. B. Shelley in his “Defense of Poetry” points out that it “lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects to be as if they were not familiar” (qtd. in Shrawan 7). It clearly suggests that readers of literary text should be very careful and cautious to find out what is distanced in such special expression.

Connotation is what we find in literary language. This is all done by using the words with special meanings that are different from dictionary meanings. Besides connotations, writers use some other special linguistic techniques to make literary texts formally and functionally engaging. The list of some of these techniques includes foregrounding, deviation, creativity, defamiliarization, etc. These special features of literary language demonstrate a writer’s expression with an artistic creation. For these artistic expressions, literary writers have the leave to convert the usual into the unusual, and the familiar into the unfamiliar. In this regard, Jacinta Onyekachi Awa maintains: “Literary Language is all about linguistic and stylistic deviation. It is about the otherness of language, literariness, defamiliarization, foregrounding of language, which heightens the aesthetics, signification, communication and meaning in literature. The literary writer is allowed, in contrast to the everyday speaker, to turn aside rules, conventions and maxims of language” (54). The quote clearly speaks about the rights of established literary writers’ poetic license, which allows them to violate the usual rules of natural languages, and this violation creates literariness, which we find in all literary texts.

Various stylistic techniques are used to create unusualness in a literary language. Imagery is one of the most practiced techniques for this. Any unusualness in language is like a metaphor as both of them give implied meaning:

Since literary representation does not represent by likeness the way pictorial images do, literary representation is itself only and always metaphorical, whether or not it employs particular figures. . . . We might also note that the literal-figurative distinction itself appeals to an implicit distinction between "letters" (writing) and "figures" (images; pictures; designs or bodies in space). (Preminger and Brogan 577)

Literary language is indirect, or metaphorical. There is no direct resemblance between the form and function of a word. To work out the real meaning out of a literary expression, dictionaries do not help us, instead we need some knowledge outside from the linguistic area. We should be able to associate the meaning of a literary expression in the way we understand an image or picture by associating it with someone or something else.

By applying the technique of using imagery, creative writers try to appeal to almost all of the senses to make the readers’ perception clear in a forceful way. The technique of language use that can appeal to our senses is known as imagery. In simple

terms, imagery is a use of language that is evocative and descriptive to create images in the readers' or hearers' minds.

Imagery as Figurative Language: Types and Uses

Due to the pictorial aspects of literary language, three technical terms related to literature come under special considerations: image, imagery and imagination. In this regard, Rob Pope remarks:

An **image** can be strictly visual (e. g. a painting, a photo) or, by extension, it can be a verbal representation of something visual (e. g. a description in a novel).

Imagery refers to figurative or metaphorical language invoking a comparison or likeness, chiefly in poetry or 'poetic' writing. **Imagination**, meanwhile, can be provisionally defined as the capacity to conceive, 'grasp' or 'see' things, both in a visual and in a more general intellectual sense. Taken together, then, all the terms in this entry have something to do, at least initially, with ways of seeing and saying, and with issues of **representation**, verbal, visual and otherwise.

(214)

Here, Pope categorizes these three terms based on their functions. Image as a picture and verbal representation of something, imagery as the use of figurative language to refer to some concept through comparison and contrast and imagination as the perception power of readers or hearers. However, the terms have something to do in common regarding the perceivers' verbal, visual and mental power, associating them with the language used in a literary text.

The use of imagery helps readers or listeners perceive the real message almost with its intended meaning expressed by the writer or speaker. Imagery is created by the use of descriptive or figurative language. In a broader sense, it covers the use of language to represent objects, actions, feelings, thoughts, ideas, states of minds and any sensory and extra sensory experience (Cuddon 322). Though brief, Cuddon's definition of imagery covers the use of language for representation of both concrete and abstraction. Pope defines imagery in a slightly different way: "Imagery refers to figurative or metaphorical language invoking a comparison or likeness, chiefly in poetry or 'poetic' writing" (214). Pope's definition focuses on the formation of figures through a comparison between the terms and the concepts.

Most literary writers usually use different types of imagery to make readers understand the message clearly. As the use of figurative or descriptive words paint pictures in the minds of readers, they feel they are seeing or hearing or feeling or tasting or smelling something while reading a text. Imagery directly or indirectly appeals to senses, so it is not difficult to make pictures in the minds. In this sense, writers help readers create mental pictures in their minds. The poet imagines something and uses a special technique of language to create imagery to describe what he/she has imagined. Readers equally contribute to make the use of imagery significant by translating it into images. Here, imagery forces the readers to imagine what the poet saw, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted.

A lot of scholars have defined imagery. Lindi Miller's definition of the term is worth mentioning: "In simple terms, imagery refers to the 'pictures' or 'images' that a writer helps to create in the reader's mind through the language that he or she uses. However, the pictures are not always concerned with what we see" (33). She means to say that these pictures can be:

- Visual – to do with what we see;
- Aural – to do with what we hear;
- Tactile – concerned with what we can feel or touch;

- Olfactory – about what we smell; or
- Gustatory – to do with the sensation of flavor and texture in the mouth. (33)

Miller points out these five types of imagery used in a literary discourse that can create images in the readers' minds. One important point she adds is that these mental pictures are not only associated with a visual aspect.

Different imageries appeal to different sense organs while creating mental pictures. The following sections briefly describe different types of imagery and the corresponding sense organs they appeal to.

Visual Imagery

This type of imagery appeals to the sense of sight. Readers or listeners are made to make a picture by visualizing something. The words appeal to the sense of sight in such a way that readers or listeners happen to envision something while reading something or listening to someone. For example, the following excerpt from William Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" presents a good example of this type of imagery:

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. (lines 1-6)

In the lines above, Wordsworth exploits the visual image to create images in the minds of readers by making them visualize a cloud floating over the valley and hills, and a host of golden daffodils fluttering and dancing in the breeze under the trees beside the lake. A reader does not have to go to that place to see the clouds, and colour, number and the movement of daffodils. The lines themselves form the images of them in their minds. If a reader reads these lines seriously and carefully, he/she finds himself/herself by the lake described in the poem. Apart from such images, the poet has skillfully created an imagery by using simile, that is, "I wandered lonely as a cloud/ that floats high o'er vales and hills." Through this imagery, the poet has been able to make us visualize his movement like that of a cloud.

Aural Imagery

A writer or speaker, through his/her words, try to create images in readers' or listeners' minds by making them hear some sounds. This type of imagery has a strong impact on our hearing sense. When the words echoing some sounds are uttered or written, readers or listeners create the images related to the sound. In literary writings, alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia are often used for aural images. The following lines from S.T. Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* present a good example of this type of imagery:

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound! (lines 60-64)

The lines highlight the presence of ice. Along with the abundance of the ice around the ship, the words 'cracked' and 'growled,' 'roared' and 'howled' convey their meaning through the sound they produce. The huge splitting ice chunks produce noise when they fall into the sea. The words have echoed the noise, creating the images of the sound of distant roar as heard by a person in a swooning fit. It is very interesting that the poet has

created even stronger images with the application of zoomorphism when he attributes ice with the sounds animals produce: “It cracked and growled, and roared and howled/ like noises in a swound!” This is also a simile, which has created a strong imagery about that ice.

Tactile Imagery

Some words produce such sensory feel that they make readers, or listeners feel as if they are touching something or are being touched. In this type of imagery, the words that we read or hear make us feel that we are touching something rough, smooth, hard, soft, cold, or hot. The words used to describe temperature, textures, softness and hardness of some object create images in our mind, and the imagery appeals to our touching sense. William Butler Yeats’ “Leda and the Swan” presents a good example of this type of imagery:

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast. (lines 1-4)

In this excerpt, readers create mental images through the words like blow, beating, caressed, caught and hold, clearly understanding the violence of rape and at the same time they also happen to feel the pain experienced by Leda during that attack. These words have the meanings to appeal to the skin, and a reader feels how Leda was hit, beaten, caressed, caught and held tightly. We have pity upon this helpless lady and hatred towards the swan for its assaults. This pity is aroused due to the images created by the feeling of touch.

Gustatory Imagery

This type of imagery is connected to the sense of taste. Here, the tongue becomes active to create images. The impressive use of gustatory imagery makes readers or listeners salivate. By using gustatory imagery, a description becomes so arresting or intense that it controls the readers’ or listeners’ tongues. John Keats in his “La Belle Dame Sans Merci: A Ballad” presents such imagery:

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew,
And sure in language strange she said –
I love thee true. (lines 25-28)

The gallant knight is provided with the roots of relish sweet, honey and manna by the madame. The sweetness of the roots is combined with honey and manna dew that make our mouth salivate. The nectorous sounds of the words have been accompanied by the soft sounding words of true love. A reader imagines the food was so sweet, and so was the language of the lady, and her love. The correspondence between the sweetness of honey and the pleasing language of love contribute to the formal beauty of the poem.

Olfactory Imagery

Olfactory imagery appeals to our sense of smell and activates our nose. Writers or speakers use the terms related to smell to create images in readers or listeners. Edmund Spenser’s ‘Sonnet 64’ presents good examples of olfactory imagery. In this sonnet, the speaker describes his beloved in terms of olfactory images, especially focusing his delight obtained from her scent while they are engaged in sensual kissing:

Comming to kisse her lyps (such grace I found)
Me seemed I smelt a guardian of sweet flowers

That dainty odours from them threw around
For damzels fit to decke their lovers bowres.
Her lips did smell lyke unto gillyflowers,
Her ruddy cheeks lyke unto roses red;
Her snowy browes lyke budded bellamoures,
Her lovely eyes lyke pincks but newly spreads,
Her goodly bosome lyke a strawberry bed,
Her neck lyke to a bouch of cullambynes;
Her breast lyke lillyes ere theyr leaves be shed,
Her nipples lyke young blossomed jessemynes.
Such fragrant flowers doe give most odorous smell,
But her sweet odour did them all excel. (735)

The speaker first compares his beloved's parts of the body with the colour and scents of different flowers like, carnations, roses, bellflowers, strawberry, columbines, lilies and jasmines. He takes delight from those scents but finally he says that the scents from her body excel those from the flowers. While reading the lines, readers are made to feel that they easily smell the scents of those flowers and compare them with the speaker's beloved's fragrance.

The images discussed above are all related to five senses of organs. It means that the mental imagery is created through the perception of one of the senses or all the senses altogether. Besides the images discussed above, critics also add two other types of images to the list: kinesthetic and organic.

Kinesthetic Imagery

An effective description of natural or artistic physical movement or actions of the characters and objects help create kinesthetic imagery. N. Pam M. S. defines it as "the cognitive recreation of the feeling of movements." Obviously, the words that we read or hear make us form the images of the movement the character(s) have demonstrated. Edgar Allan Poe presents the moving picture of a manic boy's movements: "With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once — once only. In an instant, I dragged him to the door, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done" (112-13). In his story "The Tell-tale Heart," Poe presents the boy's physical movement as if in a horror movie when he kills the old man having a hideous eye that vexed the boy. The successive occurrence of motion verbs 'threw open,' 'leaped into,' 'dragged,' and 'pulled' have been used in such a way that the boy's movements and the intensity of their speed are clearly conveyed to the minds of readers. Readers can see the boy's movement through their minds and feel the intensity of his action.

Organic imagery

This type of imagery "deals with creating a specific feeling or emotion within the readers. Phrases that make the readers feel sad, fearful, nostalgic, elated even lost are all extremely effective organic imagery" (Rowan). Organic imagery does not appeal to any sense organs but emotions.

In the short story, "About Love," Anton Chekhov beautifully paints the two characters Alyohin and Anna Alexeyevna with organic imagery at the time when these lovers are about to part from each other:

When our eyes met right there in the compartment our spiritual strength deserted us both, I took her in my arms, she pressed her face to my breast, and tears flowed from her eyes. Kissing her face, her shoulders, her hands wet with tears —

oh, how miserable we were! – I confessed my love to her, and with a burning pain in my heart I realized how needless and petty and deceptive was all that had hindered us from loving each other. (22-23)

The writer describes their powerful feelings in such a way that the readers notice their emotional state and corresponding physical reactions as if we have seen in real life. Readers are also filled with the emotions described in these lines. This vividness has been possible through the writer's skillful application of organic imagery.

A little later, Chekhov describes the emotions of Alyohin in the similar way, and readers' minds are filled with the figures of that character: "I kissed her for the last time, pressed her hand, and we parted forever. The train was already moving. I walked into the next compartment – it was empty – and until I reached the next station I sat there crying. Then I walked home to Sofyino . . ." (23). What a heart touching description! The use of imagery in these lines has created a special type of gravity and intensity of emotion in the readers. This time, too, Chekhov has used such a strong imagery that readers clearly visualize the picture of that character and share with his emotional expressions.

W.B. Yeats, in his poem "The Lamentation of the Old Pensioner," describes emotions of an old man who mourns the loss of his beautiful, energetic youth and suffers mental and physical agony in his age:

There is not a woman turns her face
Upon a broken tree,
And yet the beauties that I loved
Are in my memory;
I spit into the face of time
That has transfigured me. (lines 13-18)

In such a strong vividness, the poet describes the old man's anger towards time. The words create the pictures of old people that are stamped in our minds. The word 'spit' brings into our minds the picture of the speaker's disgust through his emotional outburst.

While analyzing a literary text, we can find different types of imagery working together in the same text. For example, the lines from "Leda and the Swan" quoted above not only present tactile imagery but also kinesthetic (the movement of the bird and of the victimized Leda), organic (the swan filled with strong sensual emotions and Leda with pain) and visual imagery (we, as readers, visualize the bird upon the girl attempting a rape). We cannot deny that a particular text may have one dominant image and others as minor ones. This situation is known as the presence of compound imagery.

The Use of Imagery in Literary Analysis

The function of imagery in literature is to generate a life-like, graphic presentation of a scene, taste, odour, touch, flavor, motion, or emotion. A writer uses imagery to demonstrate how impressively he/she can convey sensory information to the readers by activating their sense organs so that the details of any description be clear. It helps promote the imagination power of readers to envision the characters and the scenes in the literary writing. Apart from facilitating readers in clear perception of information, images drawn by using figurative language like metaphors, similes, onomatopoeia, personification, etc., serve the function of beautifying a piece of literature.

Not only to literature, imagery contributes a lot to other disciplines, too. To highlight the functions of imagery, Beverly-Colleene Galyean brings the references of classical philosophers' views:

Einstein resolved complex mathematical and physical problems through his keen ability to perceive, feel, and interpret inner images. Aristotle believed that thought was housed in images that evoked emotions and revealed inner

knowledge. Pythagoras taught his disciples to solve mathematical problems by consciously evoking dream imagery. The German chemist Kekule discovered the molecular structure of benzene while imagining a snake swallowing its tail. And the French mathematician Poincare solved complex mathematical problems in moments of visual reverie. (54)

Imagery is applicable in all areas of cognitive functions and has a strong hold upon our ability to solve problems. Knowledge in imagery provides us with some insight that helps us create mental pictures which drive us to perceive anything in a better way.

Beverly-Colleene Galyean further stresses on the use of imagery and asserts: “A common use of imagery is to develop thinking skills and accelerate mystery of cognitive material presented in class. Teachers usually have district-mandated cognitive objectives to guide their lesson planning; they use imagery activities to enhance mastery of those objectives” (54). If students are well familiar with imagery and can make mental pictures out of words, they can solve any problem better and more quickly. For example, if students are asked to write an essay on ‘a river,’ they write it better if they make the images of a river in their minds than they do not form an image of it. Imagery presents far more aspects of an object or issue than without it.

Imagery creates mental images. Without these images, the expression in the texts is less appealing to the readers. Pointing out the importance of imagery, Lindi Miller states: “It is about the emotional response that the writer evokes in you, the reader, and about the feelings or the atmosphere that he or she creates in the text.” She further adds: “Perhaps the most important aspect of all is that imagery tells us about how the writer feels towards the subject about which he or she is writing” (36). This clearly shows the writer’s tone and attitude towards the subject matter and readers. Further, the writer attempts to create emotional responses from readers with the help of imagery.

Savita Ramchandra Kothawale, highlighting the functions of imagery, states: “It is true that the imagery is inseparable part of poetry. It gives shape, meaning and life to poetry. Every image carries various messages through the word-picture. . . . It helps the reader in grasping the total meaning and giving aesthetic pleasure” (25). Besides helping readers understand the tone and attitude of the writer, imagery functions as the decorative factor, contributing a lot to the formal features of a text. Elizabeth Drew, interestingly, observes the function of imagery and calls it a tool to awaken the dead (151). It is interesting that imagery is a break in the regular pattern of an activity. The regular pattern, let us say a continuous lecture, will cause a type of monotony and the students will lose interest in the teacher’s delivery. In such a situation, when a sudden change in pattern occurs, there is a type of awakening in their senses. An application of imagery, especially guided imagery, provides some newness for a change. Now, they naturally get refreshed and get interested in the lecture.

Many studies have demonstrated various functions of imagery, which are the special techniques of expression with some impressive way of imparting message. C. Day Lewis points out that imagery functions at three levels: freshness, intensity and evocative power (qtd. in Kothawale 27). Lewis suggests that reading is a long process, which may cause monotony. However, if there is some newness in the writing intermittently, that newness helps remove the monotony, giving readers a feel of some freshness. The special use of words functions as a recess in the continuous process of reading. The second function, that is, intensity, might suggest that imagery demands readers’ greater concentration on the deviated expression, that is, imagery. The level of concentration is so intense that readers pour all their consideration upon the expression, as they have to work out the intended meaning as appropriately as possible. The third

function is creating evocative power. This means that the use of imagery drives readers to bring in their conscious minds the images created by the words or phrases.

The Use of Imagery in Pedagogy

In pedagogy, it is universally accepted that the pictorial presentation is much more impressive than the straightforward description. In saying so, it does not mean that imagery shows the physical pictures and readers visualize them, but it means that readers or listeners happen to form the mental pictures by means of the words the writer has used. This special technique of using words makes readers feel that the words appear as if they are presenting the pictures, and thus more effective communication, and impressive teaching.

In this connection, the research conducted by Anderson and Hiddle showed the result that “imagery instructions facilitate performance by forcing attention to meaning, since an image cannot be formed without dealing with the meaning of the sentence.” They further conclude: “Sentences which evoked vivid images were better recalled than sentences which evoked vague images, but the effect was not strong.” The study suggests that students who are taught the way of forming the mental pictures are found to be better in recalling what they read irrespective of the other effects. Another of their findings concluded that “. . . people instructed to form images of the events described in sentences recalled more than three times as many words on a surprise test as people who merely pronounced the sentences” (qtd. in Doore 15). This clearly shows the positive impact of imagery in pedagogical process.

In our classroom setting with heterogeneous students, lecturing with the straightforward description cannot draw attention of students. Some may find it much easier and do not attend the teachers’ explanation, while others might find it complex and get discouraged, thinking that they cannot go with the idea. Therefore, students’ interest and concentration go out of line. In such a situation, the use of imagery poses some type of unusual situation or newness, and that becomes interesting to them. They attend the explanation well and the perception is better.

Imagery also helps students in their reading process. Jorm’s research results support this argument: “Children with a specific reading disability find high-imagery words easier to read than low-imagery words. Word imagery was related to reading difficulty because it facilitates learning to read by whole word methods. When learning to read words by a whole word method, word imagery predicts ease of learning for both good and poor readers” (qtd. in Doore 17). The word-pictures not only help easy perception, but they also assist students with poor reading skills. Studies have shown that imagery provides easy ways for good and poor students to read as well as to perceive the information. Imagery makes this process easier by encouraging students to apply whole words approach, in which students grasp meaning of the entire words not an individual word in sentences.

Teaching comprises instilling newer concepts, thinking skills and analysis power. If teaching is done by creating the mental pictures, the knowledge that is acquired has a strong hold in students’ mind. Doore highlights this aspect of teaching:

Imagery can develop thinking skills and accelerate mastery of cognitive material. Imagery can be used as a tool for awareness and acceptance of self and others. When an image of success is imprinted in the brain, the person’s actions will follow positive directions. Imagery activities seem to expand the range of intellectual capabilities and increase students’ interest in curricular offerings.

(20)

The role of imagery is not limited to better perception. Its positive impact expands throughout the cognitive process. In this sense, imagery also helps in promoting thinking, perceiving, storing and retrieving information.

Guided imagery is a type of practice of imagining different aspects of an object through meditation. According to Beverly-Colleene Galyean, in this imagery, “whenever necessary, teachers ask students to close eyes, take a deep breath, and picture a specific object such as a piece of fruit, and examine it in detail.” They point out a positive impact of guided imagery on the children’s sensory awareness. Galyean further notes: “When students become accustomed to basic imagery exercises, they engage naturally in shorter focusing exercises throughout the day that enable them to quiet mind chatter, dispel distractions, and sharpen mental attentiveness” (54). Naturally, a person should meditate when he/she has to contemplate different aspects of an object, and this meditation removes diversion and establishes awareness.

Researchers have identified a lot of positive impacts of guided imagery on pedagogy. Galyean gives an example of a guided imagery exercise to emphasize the positive effect on teaching:

Students in the sixth grade are asked to write compositions about “Things That Bother Me at School” and “Things I Like at school.” The teacher begins the lesson by having the students close their eyes and imagine themselves as photographers taking pictures of things and situations they like and dislike about school. Then they’re directed to draw what they “photographed” and write about what happened during the imagery journey. Students tend to write more original material (as opposed to parroting ideas from books or other students) after the imagery prompt. (54)

The experimentation gives the message that learning through mental imagery is creative, original and genuine. Expressions based on the mental images are certainly more forceful than they are made through parroting the material. Besides writing skills, the children can enhance drawing skills if they practice guided imagery exercises.

Galyean further focuses on the importance of the formation of imagery through meditation before students are given any task to complete, especially, related to drawing, reading and writing. This meditation helps them form various relevant images, which they can easily copy in their real-life practice, resulting in better writing that presents pictures. After various observations, he concludes:

As we have observed in these projects, imagery activities seem to expand the range of intellectual capabilities and increase students’ interest in and penchant for current curricular offerings. Advocates of imagery-based learning activities predict that their continued use will not only reduce trends toward diminishing academic achievement, but will also enable students to uncover and experience vast and diverse ways of using their minds to gather and process data leading to new, even more creative forms of knowledge. (57-58)

The argument in the quote above indicates that imagery-based activities at schools not only boost students’ academic performance but they also help promote their critical-creative thinking. Students are enabled to create new ideas through imagery. Diverse ways of thinking are encouraged by imagery. Therefore, they develop skills of critical thinking once they attempt to deeply analyze imagery.

Teaching through the application of imagery has special impact upon the students. Referring to his own research results of 1980, 1981 and 1982, Galyean points out this aspect of imagery as

Students taught via imagery process merged with other affective procedures tend to score significantly higher on measures of cognitive evaluation for oral and

written communication and reading and writing skills. Both empirical and observational reports indicate that students also tend to be more attentive in class, work more cohesively with others, attend classes more frequently, and do more of whatever work is assigned. (55)

Guided imagery not only helps strengthen students' communicative skills, but it also helps enhance their interest in their studies, contribute to make them attentive and creative, and do their assignment more properly. It encourages students to be more regular and punctual. In a sense, the application of imagery in teaching involves all round development of students.

In many situations, mental imagery can also be used as a means of consolation in times of pressure upon students. The images that are formed by the words become amusing and provide a type of recreation for them. Doore's study has also concluded the same idea: "Mental imagery can be used in the classroom to alleviate undue anxiety and tension among students" (21). With the mental pictures they have formed, students find emotional outlets and come into a normal temperament.

However, it is a debatable issue in the pedagogical arena that there are views for and against the mental images. Alex Preminger et al. point out both strengths and weaknesses of imagery in teaching literature:

In the first place, the concept of mental i. has encouraged catholicity of taste, for once it is realized that not all poets have the same interests and capacities, it is easier to appreciate different kinds of poetry. . . . Second, the concept of mental i. provides a valuable index to the type of imagination with which a given poet is gifted. . . . Third, the concept of mental i. is pedagogically useful, for a teacher or a critic may encourage better reading habits by stressing this aspect of poetry. (560)

The text clearly highlights the merits of mental images in pedagogical performance. The mental image is said to help readers or researchers to appreciate poetry, explore the imagination power gifted to a particular poet and to encourage better reading habits. It means the knowledge of mental imagery strengthens a critic or a reader to make a deep analysis of a poem. It is, in fact, a truth that if a reader cannot get to the poet's intended meaning, the analysis sounds less effective. It is imperative that readers understand the level of imagination power in a poet to assess what kinds of images and for what purpose they have been used. The most important aspect of mental imagery is that it arouses reading habits once readers enjoy the application of images as they put the readers in a certain type of emotional state. Concisely, the mental images sharpen the analyzing power of a reader or a researcher.

The mental imagery in pedagogy is also seen to be hampering the way we perceive things. In this regards, Preminger et al. themselves speak in counter to their own views about the merits of mental images. They point out the following weak points of imagery:

But the disadvantages of the mental i. approach almost outweigh its advantages. For one thing, there is an insoluble methodological problem, in that readers are just as different from one another in their i.-producing capacities as poets, and therefore the attempt to describe the imagination of a poet is inextricably bound up with the imagination of the critic who analyzes it. Second, this approach tends to overemphasize mental i. at the expense of meaning, feeling and sentiment (Betts). And third, in focusing upon the sensory qualities of images themselves, it diverts attention from the function of these images in the poetic context. (560)

Different views against teaching through imagery seem to be equally strong. In fact, it is true that there are readers with diverse capacity to perceive information. Most probably, majority of readers fail to understand the intended meaning a writer wants to convey through his/her imagery method. In some cases, wrong interpretation of a work cannot be ignored, and it clearly misleads many readers. Likewise, metaphors and similes are so strong expressions that readers are often filled with certain type of emotion, and this emotional outburst deprives them of working out a correct meaning of that expression. Further, readers might sometimes misinterpret the functions of images that appeal to senses.

Conclusion

Based on the available literatures, the study concludes that teaching through imagery has various advantages like arousing interest in readers and developing the power of imagining different meanings. Imagery as a literary technique helps students with effective and long memory, encouraging imagination power in students. It is equally useful for teachers as it can get their students engaged in extensive reading and literary analysis. The focus of this study is, especially, to observe whether imagery helps students understand the taught information clearly, and how far they can retain and apply the acquired information. Further, the available literatures also confirm that the merits of teaching by using guided imagery far outweigh the demerits.

With the knowledge of imagery, students can create new ideas, as they have to think seriously to work out the real meaning. They are compelled to think critically because they have to critically consider different connotations of imageries as they are figurative language and straightforward meaning is of no use.

The application of imagery in pedagogy has another significance. Teaching in lecture method often sounds monotonous. Even a few minutes' lecture causes monotony to students. If the teachers cannot change the situation intermittently during the teaching process, it is a pedagogical failure. A teacher's ability to bring in some newness during teaching repeatedly gets students refreshed every time the situation is changed. The use of imagery is a type of newness and can create a break in that monotony. Once the monotony gets disconnected, students naturally show interest and become active in the learning process. Imagery is unusualness. When unusualness occurs, it provides certain mental energy or freshness, encouraging learners to take active part in learning. Therefore, it has great role in modern pedagogy.

In conclusion, the study reveals that the use of imagery helps students practise creative and critical thinking. If readers seriously try to work out the real function of imagery, they really get engaged in the meaning making process, and the result is that they come up with some new ideas, thus giving a way to creativity. On the other hand, readers have to consider a lot regarding different aspects of that imagery. They try to examine the causes, consequences, appropriateness and significance of imagery. When they think critically, they come up with some novel ideas, so there is a chance of creativity.

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